

**GAMBLE
ASSOCIATES**

678 Massachusetts Avenue Suite 502
Cambridge MA 02139

November 6, 2015

Steve Magoon, Director
Community Planning and Development
149 Main Street Watertown, MA 02472
Cc: Gideon Schreiber, Andrea Adams, Michael Mena
Sent via Email

**WATER MILLS AT BRIDGE POINT
DESIGN REVIEW**

Based on Schematic Drawings

Dear Mr. Magoon,

This memo represents an outside design review for the Water Mills at Bridge Point Project located at 330, 340 and 350 Pleasant Street in Watertown, MA. The drawings were submitted by developer Mark Copolla with Annino Incorporated, Architects and Planners. We first received the drawings via email on Thursday, October 15, 2015. The initial meeting between Gamble Associates, the city, the developer and his architect occurred on Thursday, October 29, 2015, at which time we reviewed the project's ambitions. This review addresses the Schematic Design set as it relates to Watertown's "Design Guidelines for Commercial Corridors" adopted on June 30, 2015. The design review recognizes the positive aspects of the new development and highlights some areas where the project can be improved or where greater study is warranted. The comments are listed in the order in which they appear in the Design Guideline and Standards document. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



David Gamble, AIA AICP LEED AP
Principal, Gamble Associates
Lecturer, Department of Urban Planning and Design
Harvard Graduate School of Design

WATER MILLS AT BRIDGE POINT DESIGN REVIEW

Based on Schematic Drawings

The primary critique of the building revolves around three (3) issues:

1. Enhance the relationship between Pleasant Street and the Charles River;
2. Improve the visibility of commercial space in the building in relationship to the site's intrinsic assets, namely, activating the southern portion of the site along the Charles River, and;
3. Simplify the building's elevations.

PUBLIC REALM INTERFACE

Objective: Enhance the character of the street edge by increasing the level of transparency of ground floor uses and create well-designed, appropriately-scaled and publicly-accessible exterior spaces between the building and the street.

- The setback to Pleasant Street is appropriately-scaled and the ground floor has commercial spaces with residential units on floors two and three.
- The building has many exterior spaces in the form of balconies and publically-accessible roof areas for residents and visitors.
- The majority of the parking area is under-cover at the ground level and - with the exception of the center entry drive in the middle of the property - not visible from the street.

Recommendations:

- Consider the use of an awning or canopy to shade the outdoor spaces that flank the center access drive and provide visual interest. The center drive area should *not* be dominated by asphalt and cars. Rather, it should encourage pedestrian movement between the building masses without diminishing the potential for cars to enter the parking zone. The center space should be designed as a "shared street" with retail spaces wrapping it.
- The lobbies and entries to the building should be made more visible.
- A vegetated buffer along the building's eastern elevation will enhance the public walkway.

PARKING AND ACCESS

Objective: Opportunities for shared parking should be pursued to diminish the impact of the automobile. Development should consider the pedestrian first, then bicyclists, then transit riders then the automobile.

- Parking for the commercial and residential uses is largely shielded behind the retail spaces.
- Access to the residential parking areas is through a single door along Pleasant Street.

- There is a landscaped public walkway along the eastern edge of the site.
- There are only two curb cuts and minimal surface parking.

Recommendations:

- Consider the central vehicular access drive to be a “shared street” providing pedestrians, cyclists as well as cars access towards the Charles River.
- Include bike storage for tenants and patrons of the retail spaces
- Anticipate the potential for a small bike repair station located towards the southern end of the property and could be shared between residents and commuters using the bike path.
- Parking that is located under the buildings should be visually screened wherever possible

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Objective: Balance environmental and aesthetic concerns.

- The use of window shading and awnings reduces solar gain
- Portions of the top of the parking deck is envisioned as a green roof and is accessible

Recommendations:

- Consider raingardens and bio-swales to address stormwater retention and filtration
- Utilize exterior patio spaces for permeable pavers
- Pursue the viability for roof-mounted solar arrays
- Heavily plant the southern edge of the site to preclude runoff from reaching the river

BUILDING MASSING

Objective: Break down the scale of large monotonous building elevations and create pass-throughs which diminish super-blocks.

- The building is broken down into east and west buildings and the west building has a break
- The west building is further broken down into two buildings emerging from a single parking plinth, helping to create the impression of a series of structures rather than one large one.

Recommendations:

- Consider bringing the building elevations down to the ground at the south, west and east elevations to minimize the visual presence of the parking
- Some modulation at the corners of the center space could accentuate the main access drive

BUILDING HEIGHTS

Objective: Setbacks should be used to create vibrant streetscapes.

- At three (3) stories, the complex is significantly lower than other large residential developments along Pleasant Street
- There is a variety of parapet heights
- A clear delineation of lower and upper portions of the building is present with a material change on the ground floor and a modest second/third floor setback

Recommendations:

- Consider simplifying the cornice/eave height on all elevations
- Less variation in the parapet heights will make the building appear less chaotic

BUILDING SETBACKS

Objective: Setbacks should be used to modulate elevations, reduce the perception of a building's height from the street and engender a vibrant streetscape.

- Setbacks above the retail level break down the massing and provide opportunities for landscaping

Recommendations:

- Despite the objective above, the multiple additions and subtractions of the building elevations appear too much for the scale of the building and would benefit from some simplification
- Opportunities for a communal space at the roof level, setback from Pleasant Street, may be desirable.

FAÇADE TREATMENT

Objective: Break up long, monotonous facades and create depth in the building elevations. Increase ground level transparency.

- There is a change of materials between the residential portions of the building on the upper floors and the retail spaces on the lower floor
- There is a variety of window sizes and configurations
- Variations in the plan create depth and shadow along the elevation and create balconies

Recommendations:

- Establish greater consistency in the elevations with fewer elements

- Utilize high-quality materials (see below)

MATERIAL SELECTION

Objective: Avoid cheap exterior finishes and encourage the use of natural, high quality finishes.

- There is a variety of colors on the elevation in warm, natural hues
- The use of awnings, canopies, eaves and balconies provide opportunities to introduce a varied material palette

Recommendations:

- Consider the ground plane of the central access drive having a different paving pattern to reinforce the connection from Pleasant Street to the Charles River
- Use screening material for the areas where parking can be seen from the bike path or public right-of-way

SIGNAGE

Objective: Strike a balance between the desire to call attention to an individual business and the desire for a positive collective image.

- Awnings at the retail spaces provide space for signage and branding

Recommendations:

- Explore opportunities for signage at the building corners to direct pedestrian traffic between Pleasant Street and the Charles River.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This review has shied away from issues of architectural language, detail or character, as there is not enough information on the drawings at this stage. While there are differing views about what is an appropriate “character” for a mixed-use building along Pleasant Street, our sense is that the building’s architectural expression is *trying to do too much*. There are multiple building setbacks and undulations which, while breaking down the overall mass of the building, reduce the integrity of the elevations. From Pleasant Street the complex will be seen largely as two buildings separated by a 50 foot space. In light of the fact that the two building lengths are not that large (the west building elevation along Pleasant Street is 164’-6”) we feel some simplification of the elevations is warranted. The building will

never be mistaken as a series of row-houses or individual buildings which is what it appears to try and accomplish. One should resist the urge to break the elevations into too many individual elements. Having said that, much of the success of the project will have to do with the choice of materials and the detailing, fabrication and installation of the elements. Durable, high-quality materials will add a level of sophistication to a large and/or minimally-detailed façade. The converse is also true; non-renewable and inexpensive materials will make a nicely-proportioned building look cheap. We recommend higher-quality materials like stone, wood cladding or masonry panels, especially at the base of the building.

Water Mills at Bridge Point has the *potential* to alter the type and character of development that has taken place the last 15 years along Pleasant Street. At just three stories, the project is of a lower scale than many other mixed-use or residential projects and most of the parking appears hidden from view which is a positive urban design attribute. There is ground floor commercial space. While the developer and his team have added a good deal of density to the site, they have also attempted to maintain access between the river and the primary corridor. We encourage this type of thinking and suggest that even greater attention be placed on the public realm in the *center* of the site.

This can be achieved in a variety of ways, including:

1. Relocating the restaurant space to the south/river end of the development and creating a more pedestrian-oriented environment that creates a destination
2. Treat the center drive as a shared-street as opposed to a drive aisle
3. Wrap the center space with some commercial space and utilize sustainable landscaping strategies to address issues of stormwater runoff and retention.

End of Memo.
11/5/15

WATER MILLS AT BRIDGE POINT

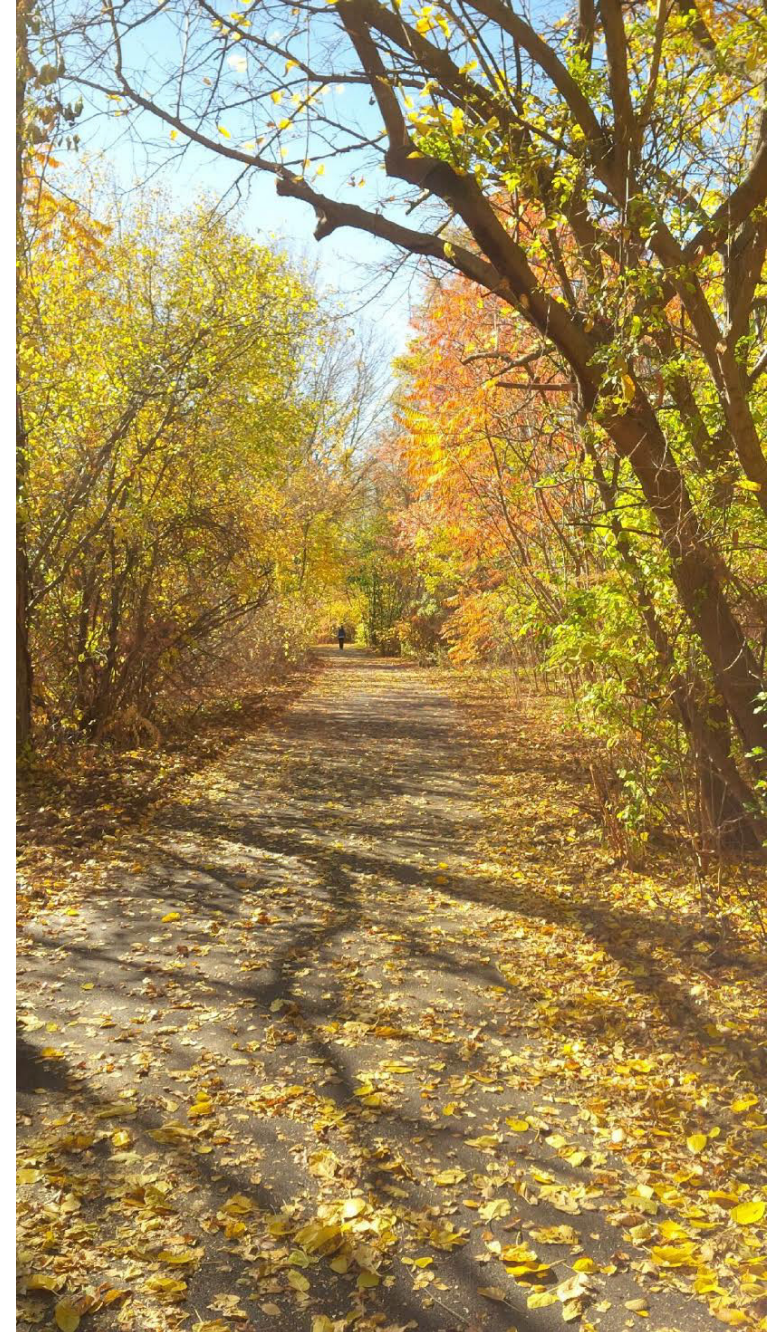
DESIGN REVIEW

COMPLETED FOR:
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT + PLANNING DEPT.
THE TOWN OF WATERTOWN, MA

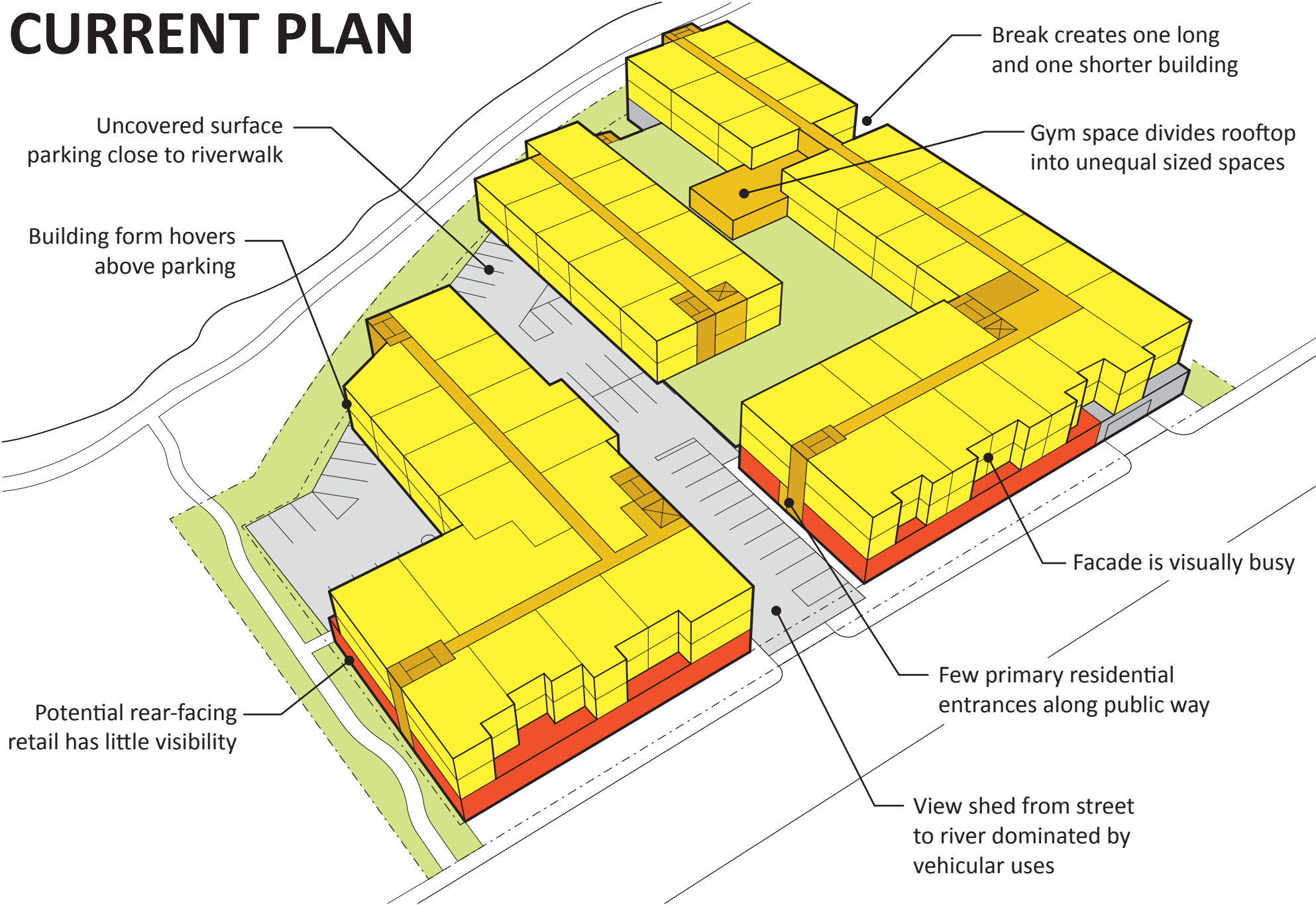
NOVEMBER 6, 2015

architecture
urban design

GAMBLE
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CURRENT PLAN



(72) 1-bdrm units
(26) 2-bdrm units

98 Units

(1) 7,250 SF retail space on Pleasant St
(1) 7,600 SF retail space on Pleasant St

14,850 SF Retail

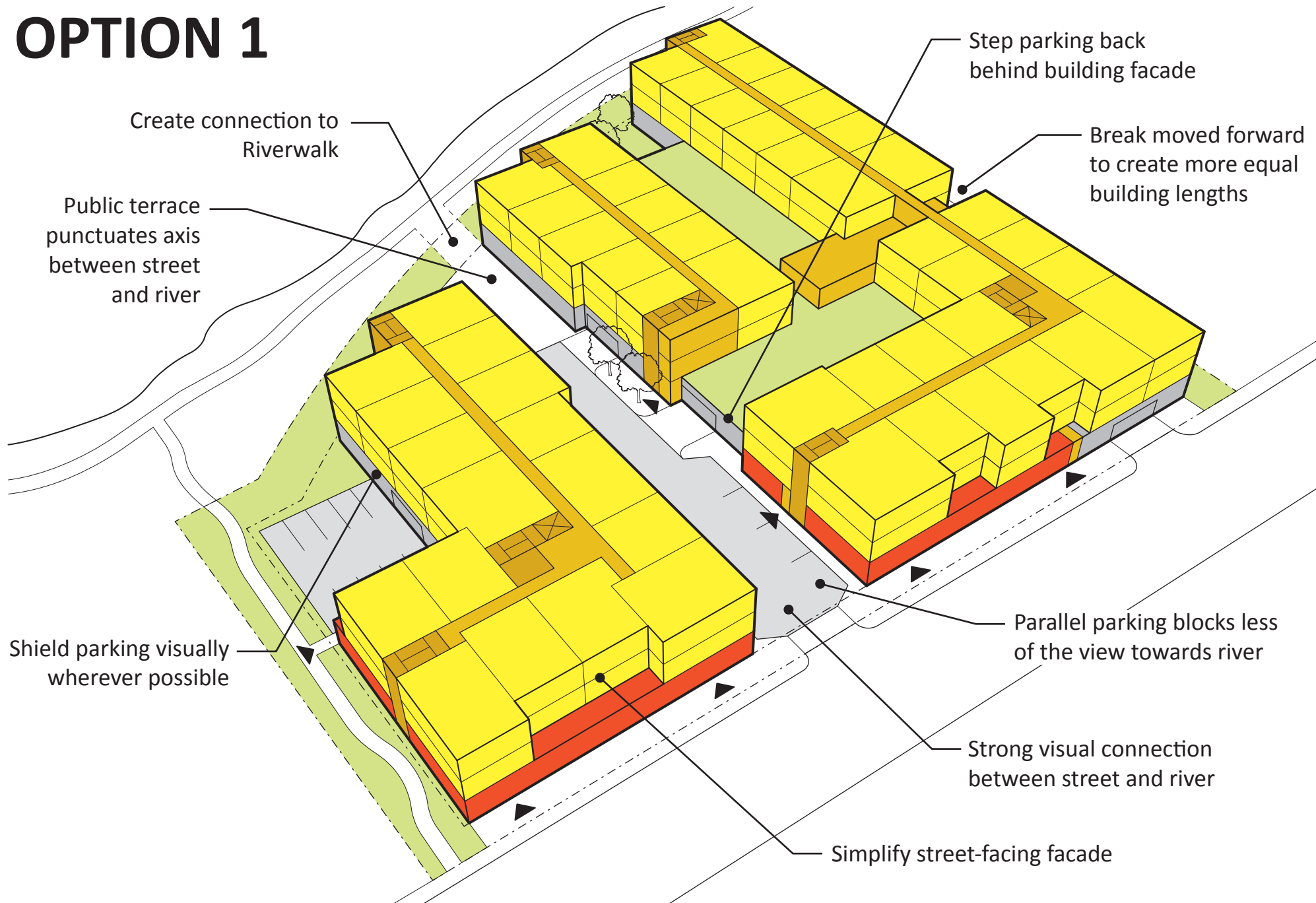
(108) Resident cars on lifts
(2) Resident handicap spaces

110 Resident Spaces

(73) Covered spaces for Retail
(35) Uncovered spaces for Retail

108 Retail Spaces

OPTION 1



(73) 1-bdrm units
(27) 2-bdrm units

100 Units

(1) 6,600 SF retail space on Pleasant St
(1) 7,600 SF retail space on Pleasant St

14,200 SF Retail

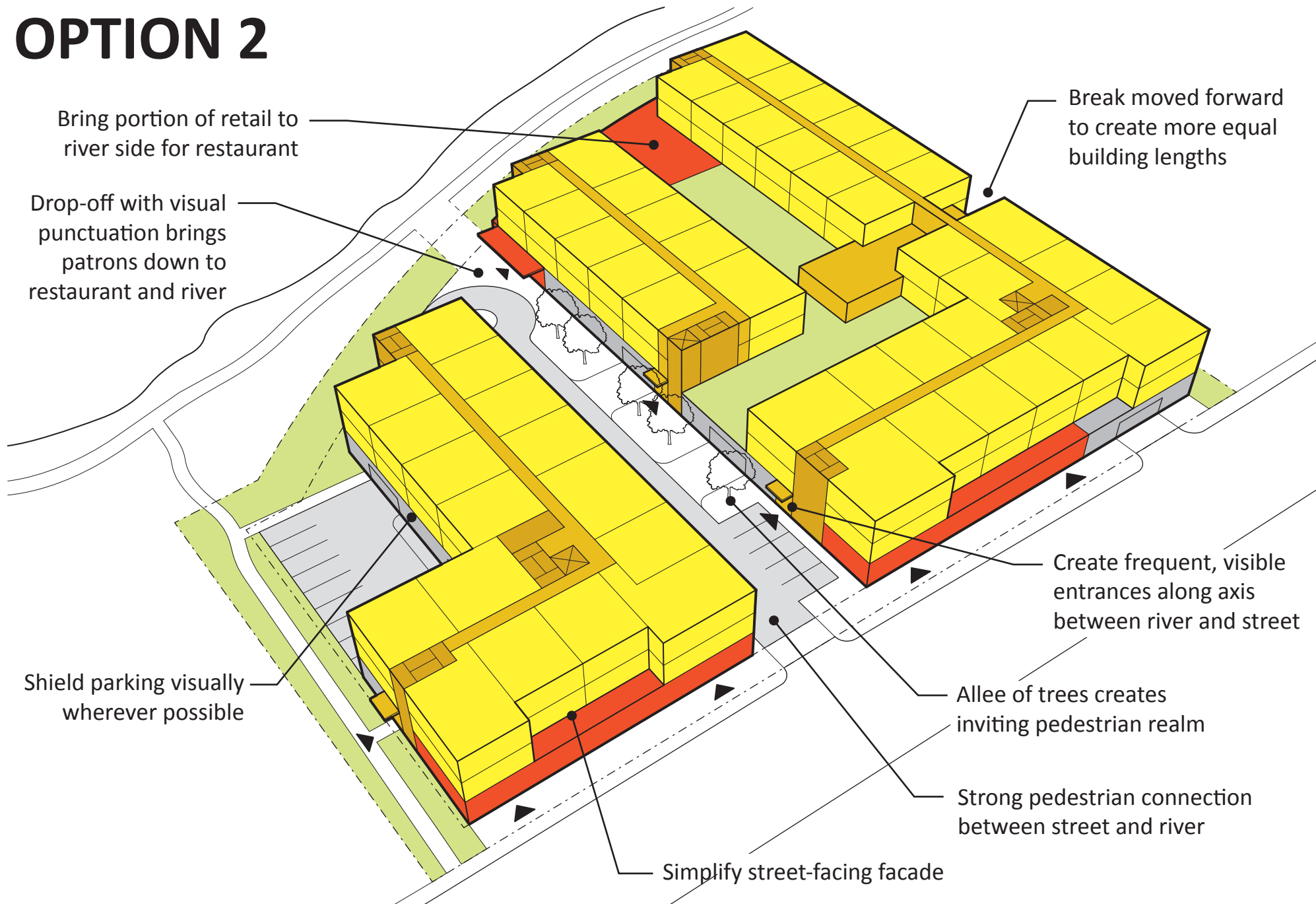
(102) Resident cars on lifts
(2) Resident handicap spaces

104 Resident Spaces

(85) Covered spaces for Retail
(8) Uncovered spaces for Retail

93 Retail Spaces

OPTION 2



(73) 1-bdrm units
(26) 2-bdrm units

99 Units

(2) 5,000 SF retail space on Pleasant St
(1) 4,700 SF restaurant space at River

14,700 SF Retail

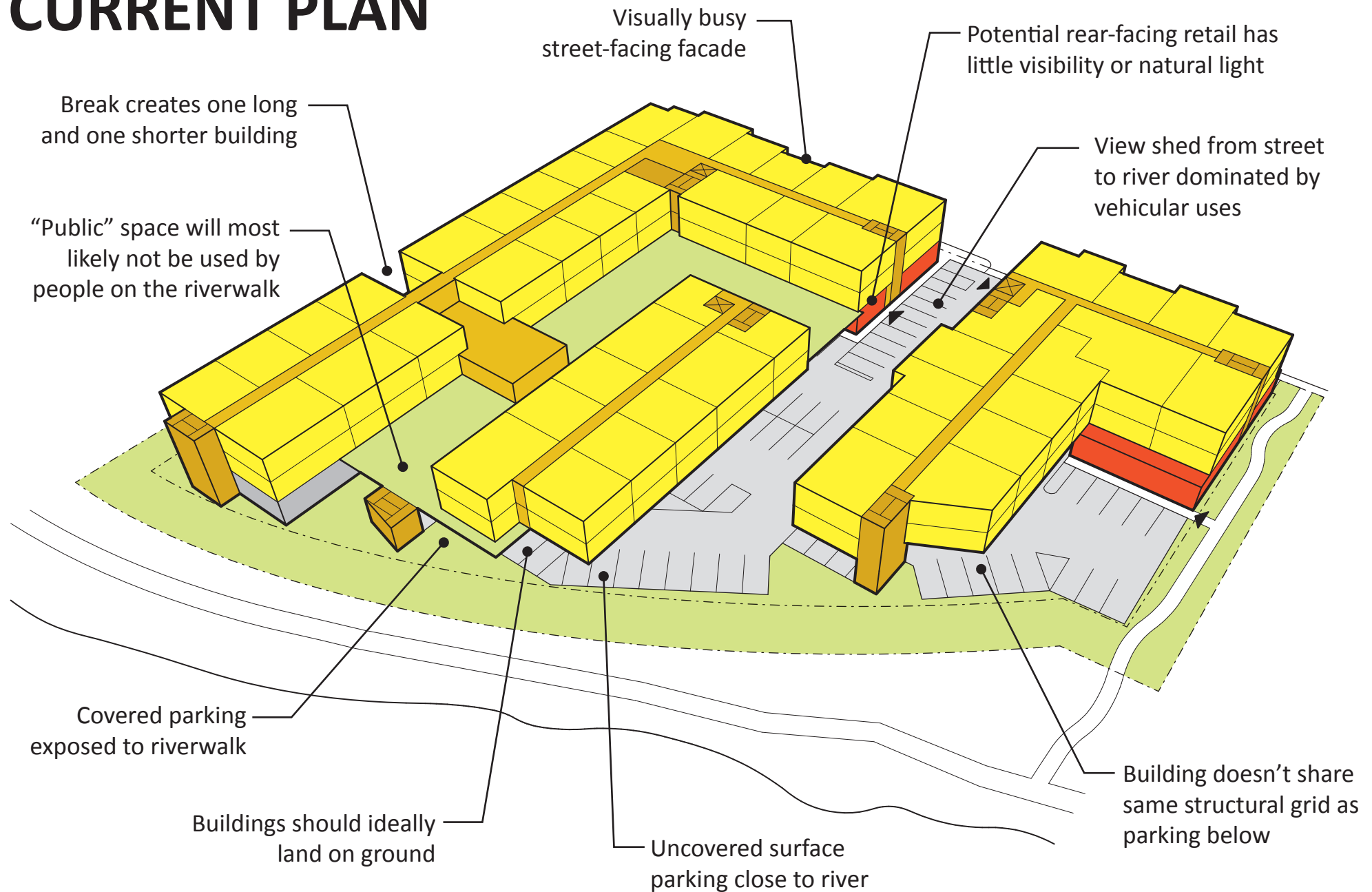
(100) Resident cars on lifts
(2) Resident handicap spaces

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(86) Covered spaces for Retail
(14) Uncovered spaces for Retail

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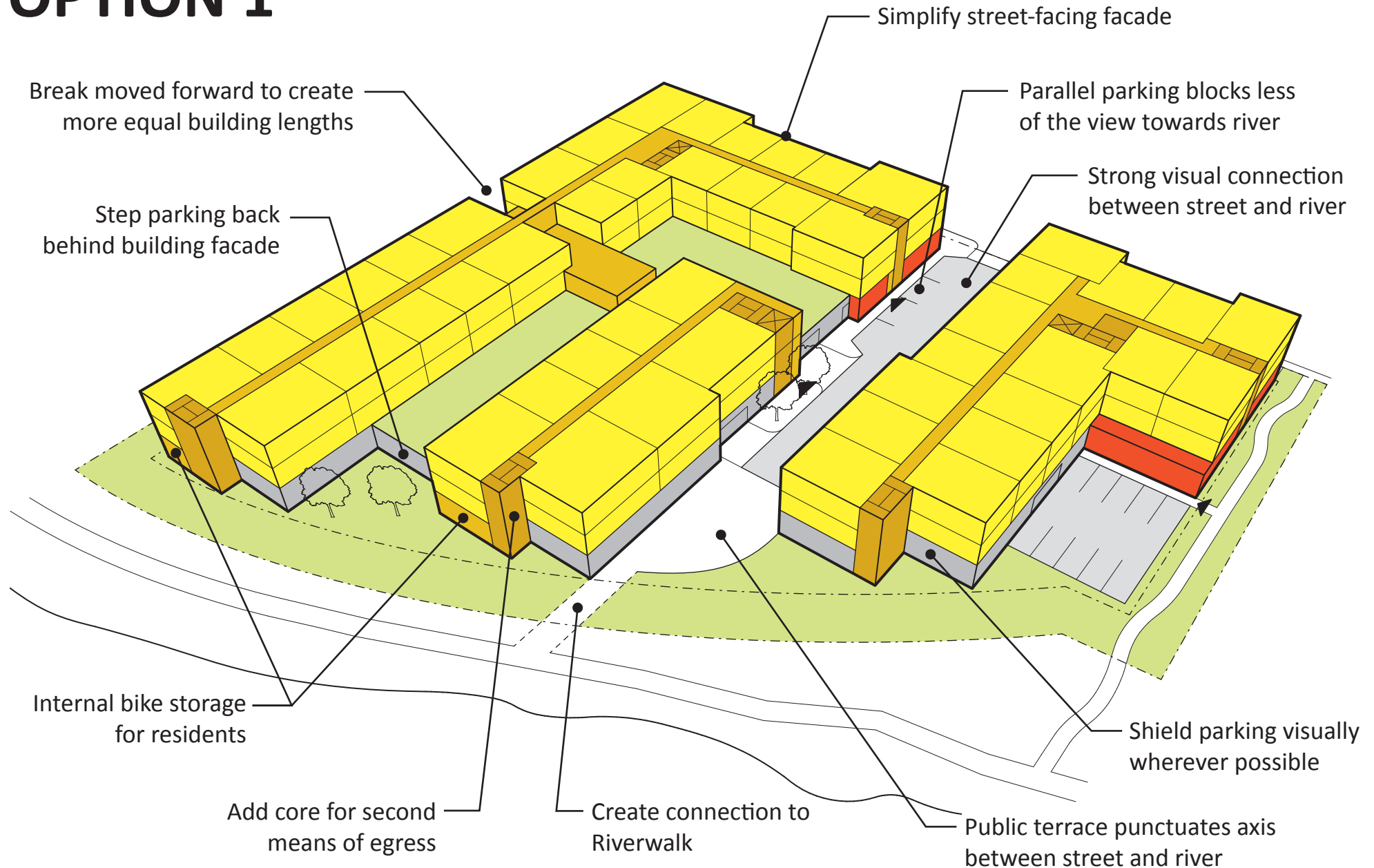
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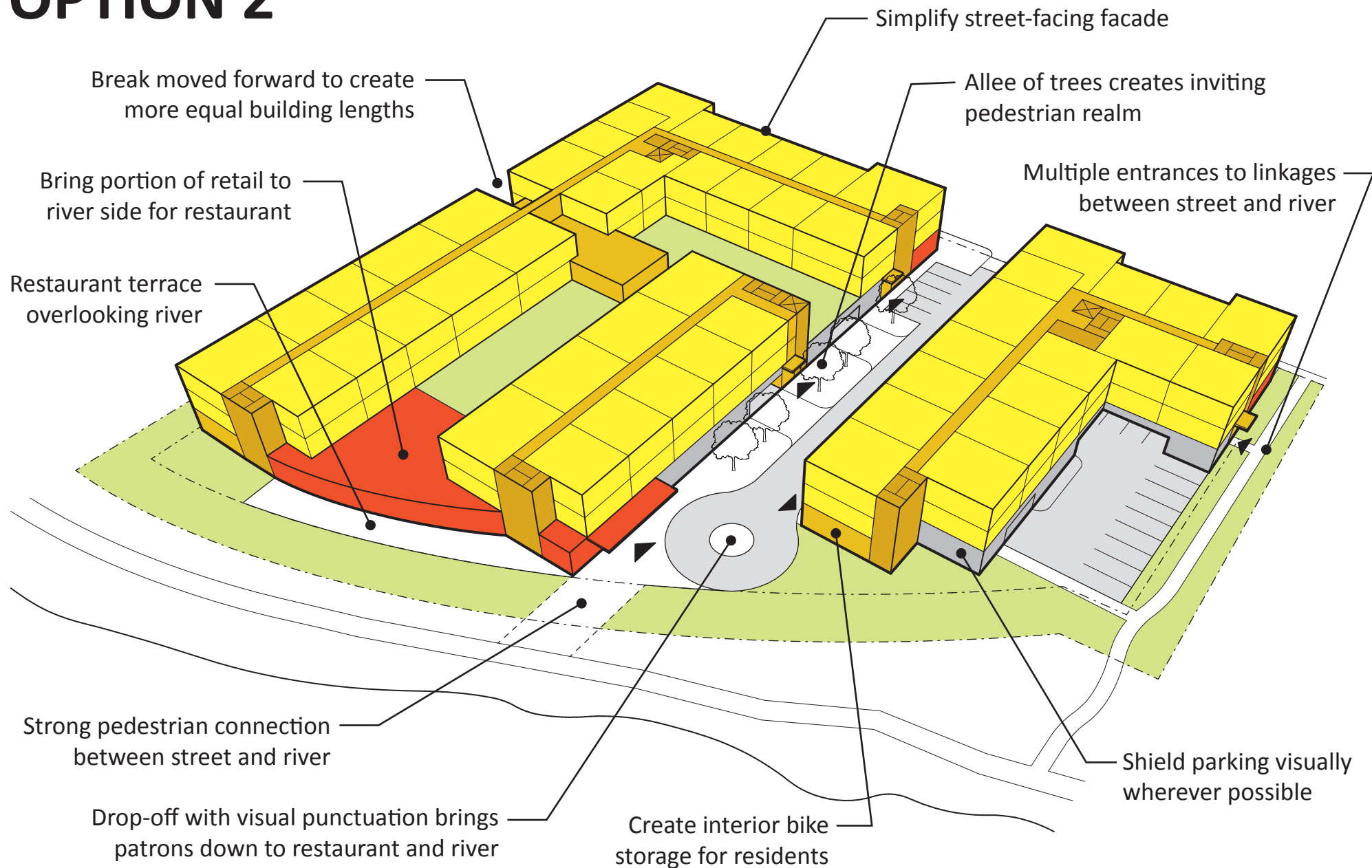
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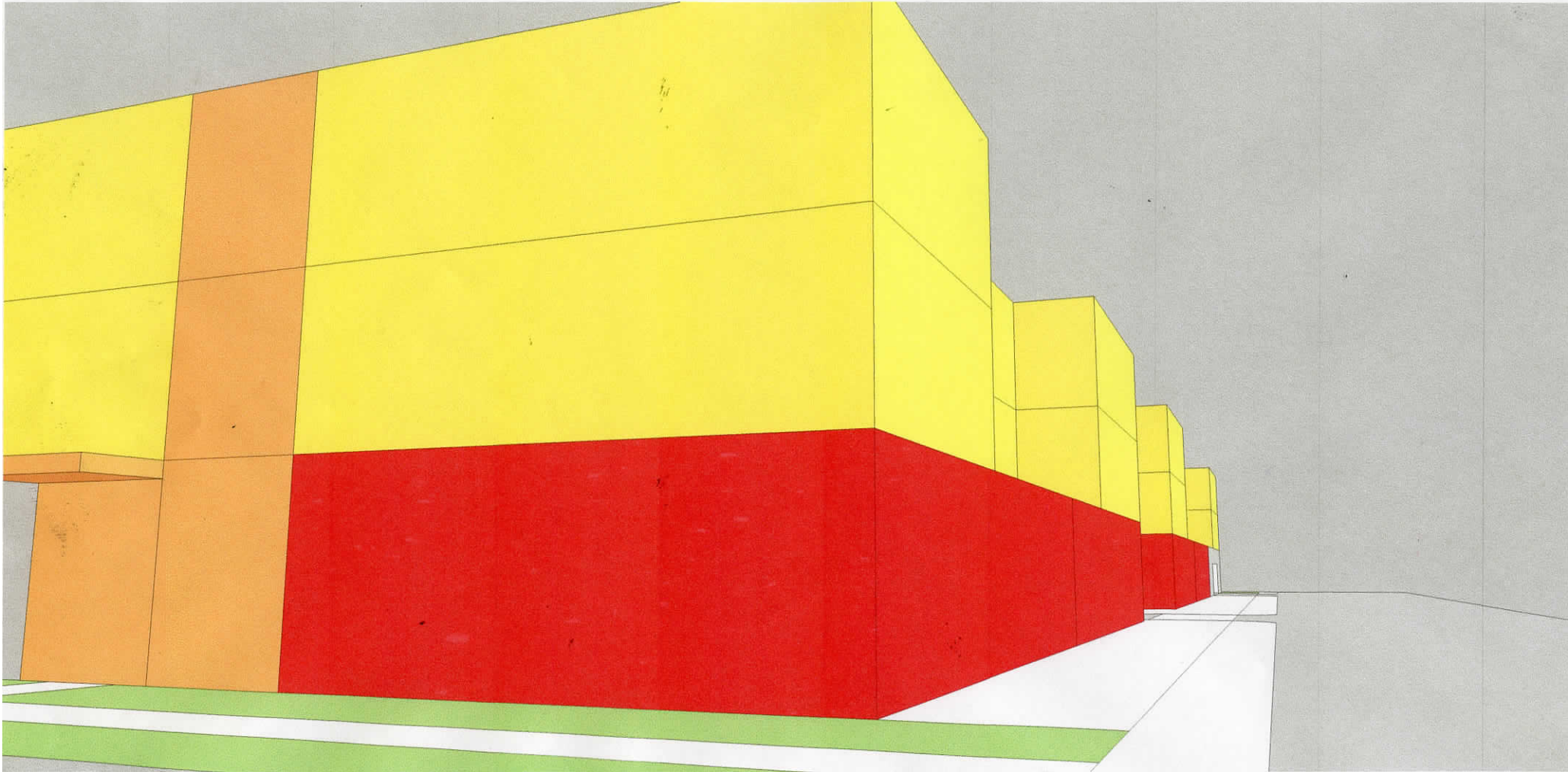
ALLEE PRECEDENTS



ARCHITECTURAL PRECEDENTS



PERSPECTIVE FROM PLEASANT ST



Water Mills @ Bridge Point

11.5.15 GAMBUE ASSOCIATES

VIEW 3

Entry
overhangs

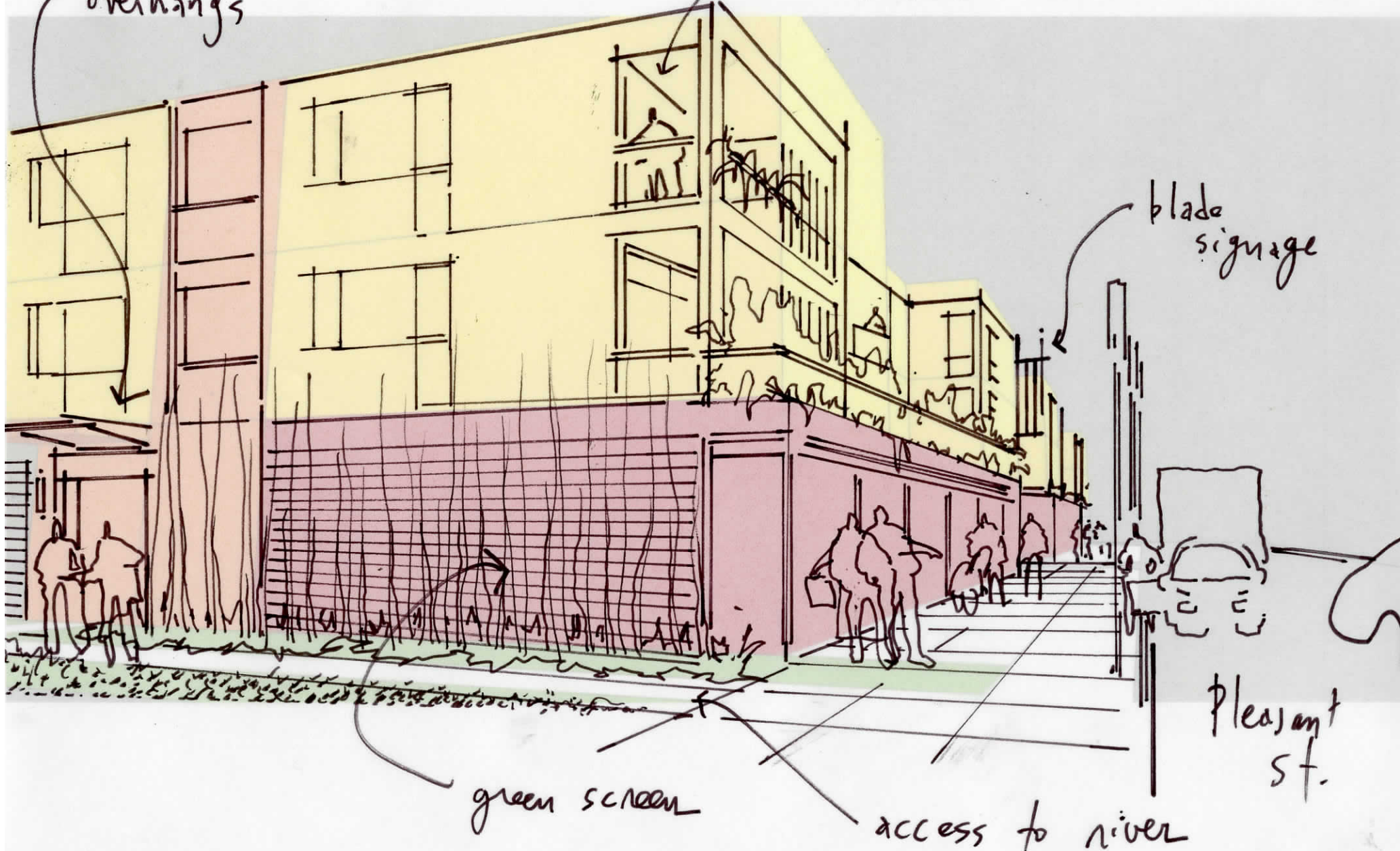
exterior
terraces

blade
signage

Pleasant
St.

green screen

access to river



Water Mills @ Bridge Point

11.5.15 GAMBLE ASSOCIATES

VIEW 3

Entry
overhangs

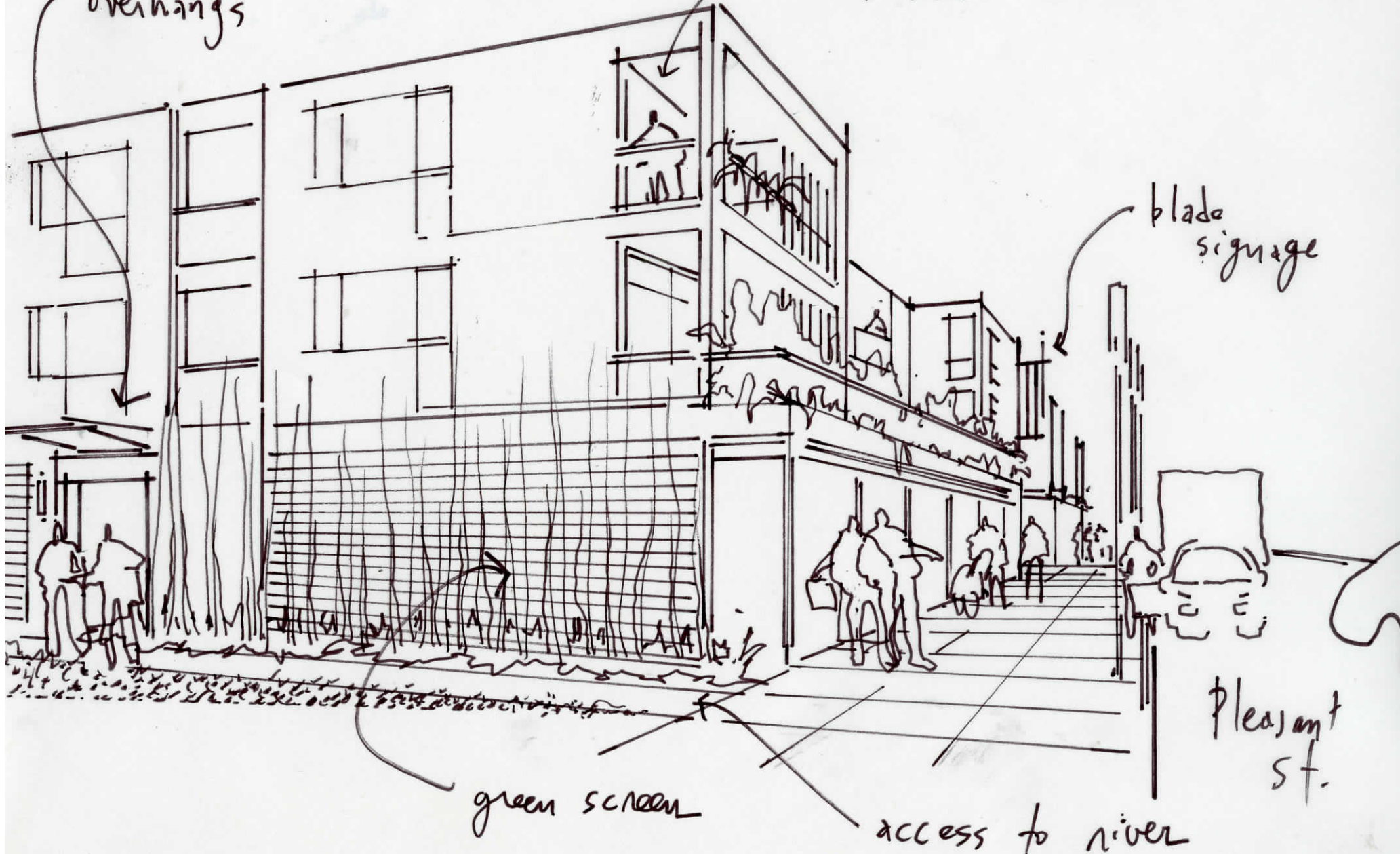
exterior
terraces

blade
signage

green screen

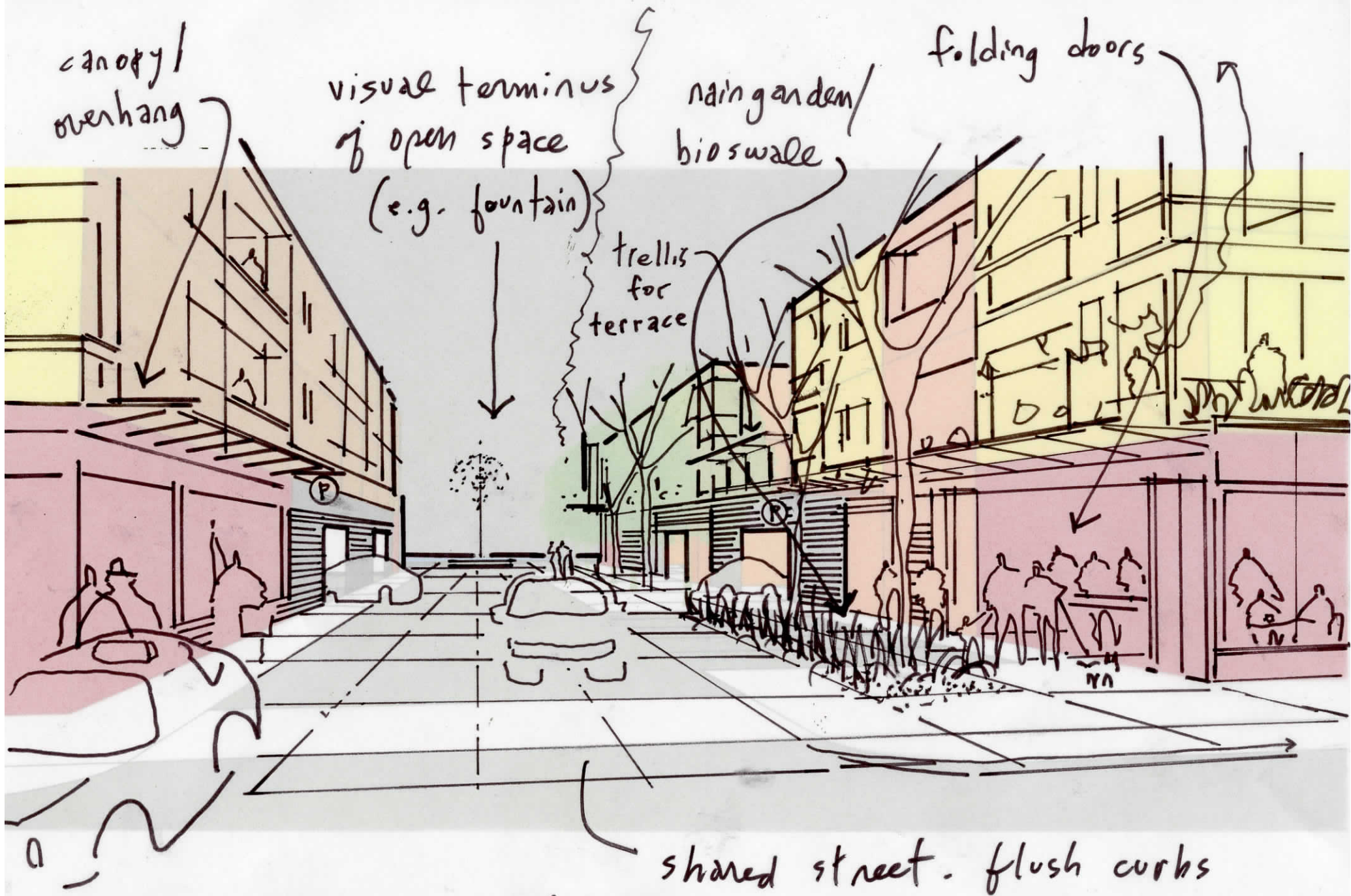
access to river

Pleasant
St.



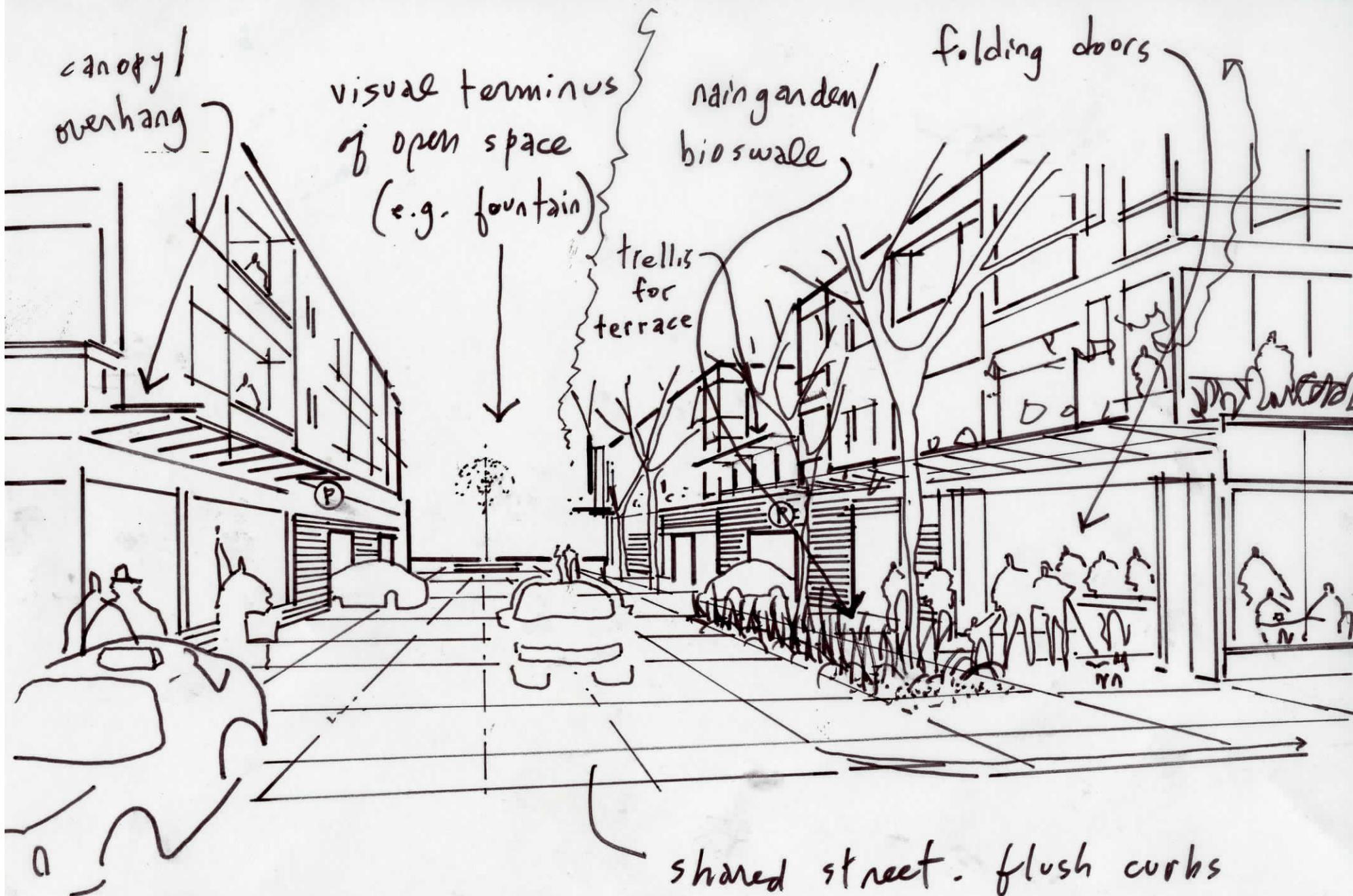
PERSPECTIVE DOWN ALLEE TOWARDS RIVER





Water Mills @ Bridge Point
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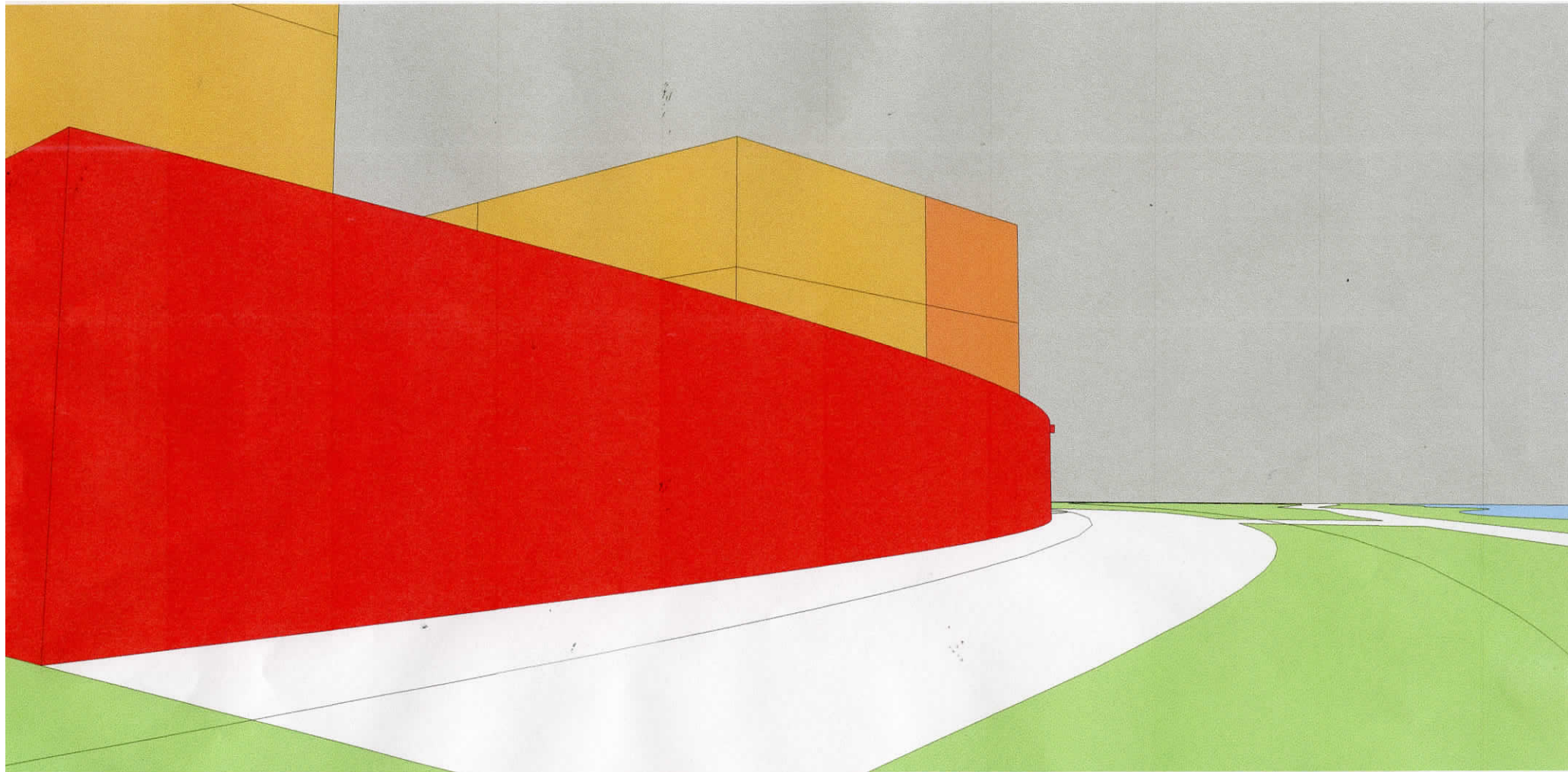
VIEW 1

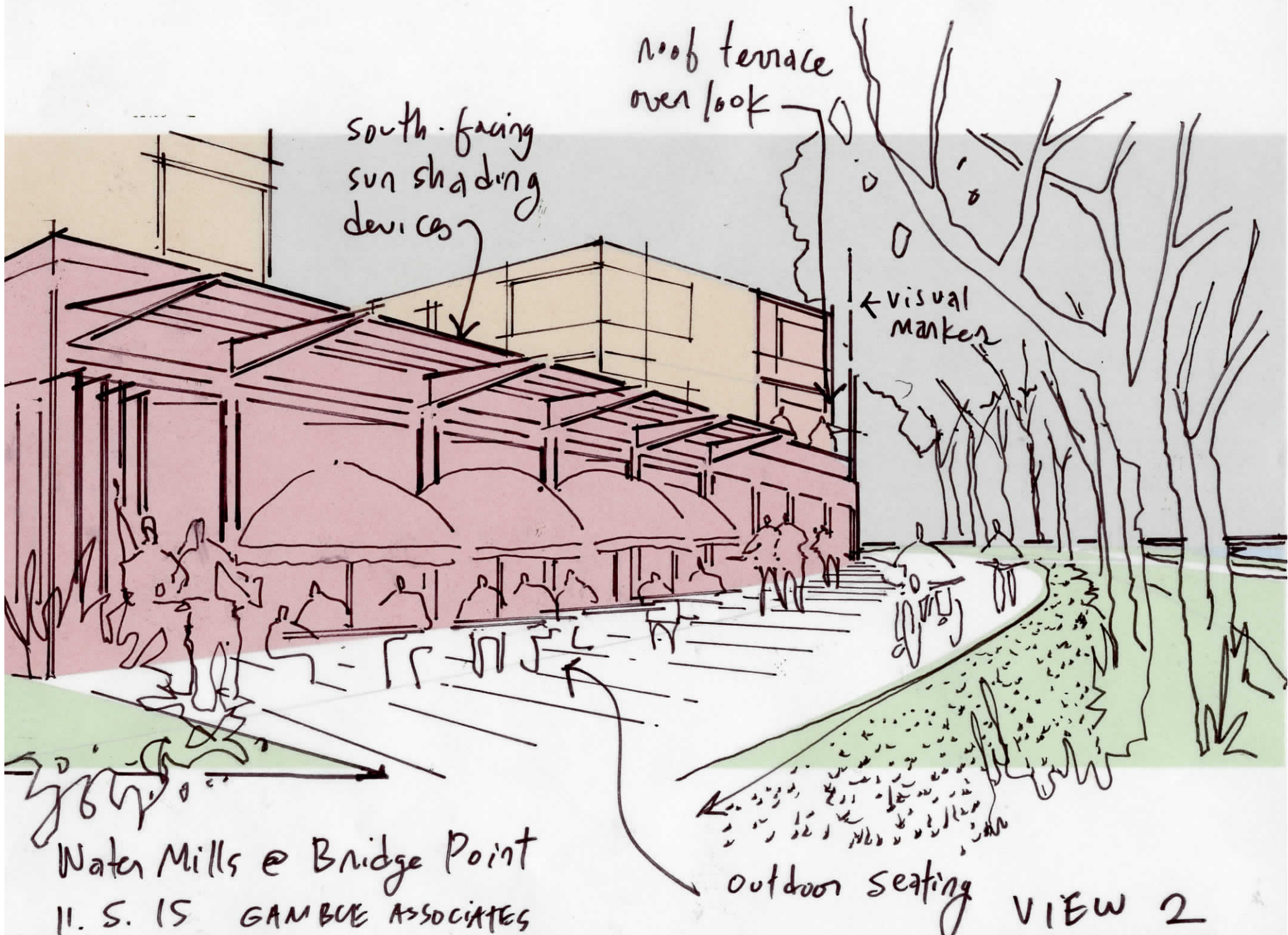


Water Mills @ Bridge Point
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VIEW 1

PERSPECTIVE OF RESTAURANT FROM RIVERWALK





roof terrace
overlook

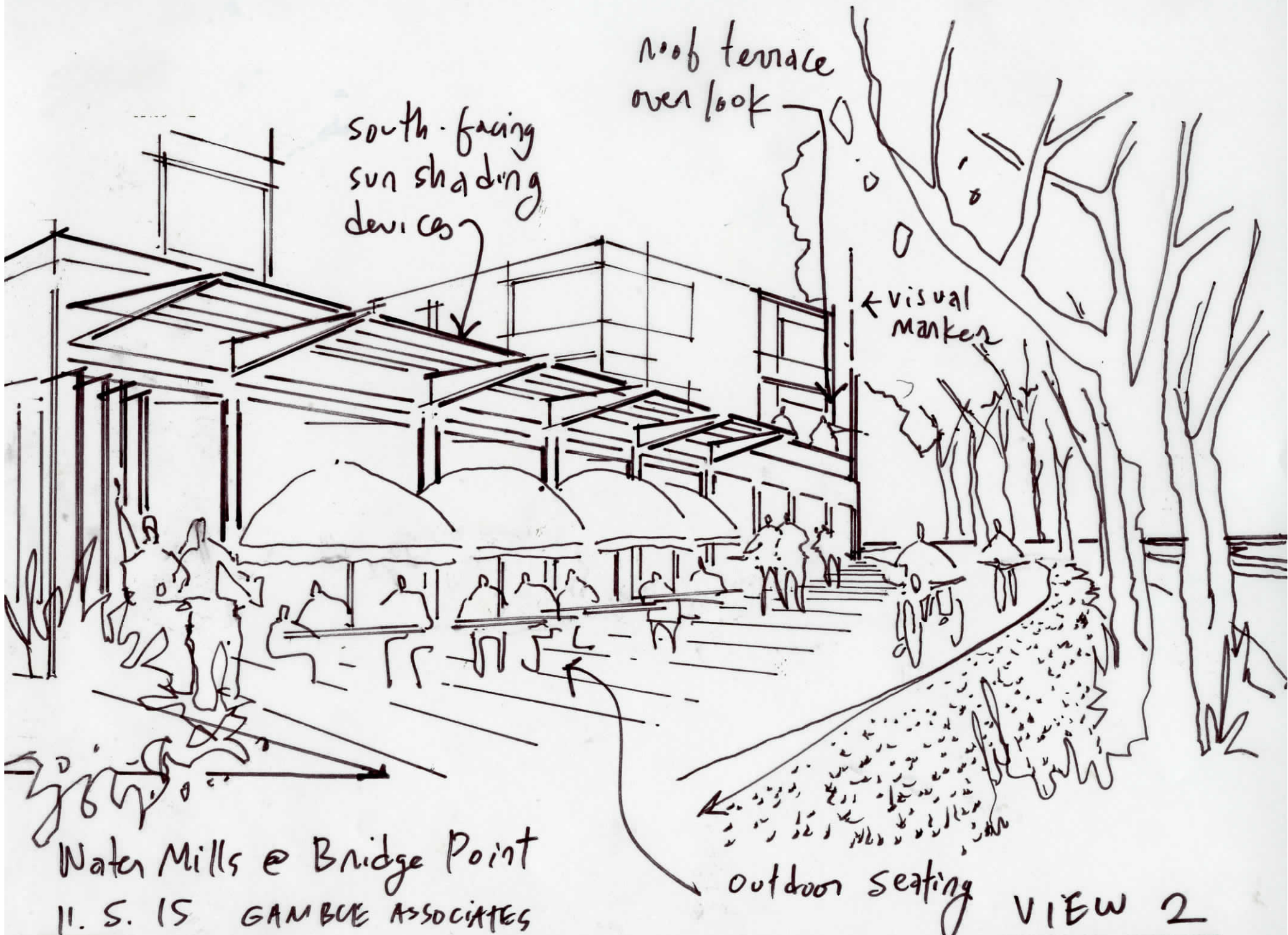
south-facing
sun shading
devices

← visual
marker

outdoor seating

VIEW 2

Water Mills @ Bridge Point
H. S. IS GAMBUZ ASSOCIATES



Water Mills @ Bridge Point
11. S. 15 GAMBUE ASSOCIATES

outdoor seating VIEW 2

PLEASANT STREET ELEVATIONS

